

The gratitude training to enhance the psychological well-being among adolescents with single parents

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ABSTRACT

Psychological well-being is an important component for adolescents. This research examined the influence of gratitude training to enhance the psychological well-being of adolescents with single parents at a Junior High School. This research applied a true experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design. The subjects were taken randomly and consisted of 24 adolescents with single parents. The subjects were then grouped into experimental and control groups, each consisting of 12 individuals. The experimental group received the gratitude training, consisting of 6 sessions. The psychological well-being scale for Indonesian adolescents aged between 12 and 15 was used to collect the data. ANOVA mixed design with SPSS 25 for Windows was applied to analyze the data. The result shows a significant interaction between the group and test, indicating the changes between the experiment and control groups significantly differ from pretest to posttest. Based on post hoc analysis, there is a significant mean difference in psychological well-being in the experimental group, with the mean of the pretest being lower than in the posttest. Therefore, gratitude training enhances the psychological well-being of adolescents with single parents. Adolescents need to apply gratitude to their daily activities to enhance their psychological well-being.

Introduction

Some children grow up with single parents. Single parent refers to a family condition with only one parent due to death, divorce, and single-parent role action (Ayuwanty et al., 2018). Of course, missing one of the families' spouses will influence their social life, including their status, roles, and psychological, emotional, and economic conditions (Noviati & Jatningsih, 2015).

Family conditions influence the psychological condition of the children. Divorced parents negatively impact adolescents (Ayulanningsih & Karjuniwati, 2020). Adolescents with divorced parents may experience sadness, stress, and trauma (Hermansyah et al., 2020). Lack of support, protection, and compassion also influenced the adolescents' psychological condition (Sukmawati & Oktora, 2021), including negative emotional and social development, difficulty in developing personal concepts and controlling emotions, and the incapability to establish relationships with peers and the environment (Hayati, 2016).

For children, losing parents due to death or divorce before reaching 17 years old is correlated to low self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive inter-individual interaction (Ryff, 2013). Moreover, students with divorced parents had low psychological well-being (Ramadhani et al., 2016). Lack of family support for children also correlates to depression symptoms and chronic conditions when adolescents get older and to well-being, in which personal dignity moderates the situation (Ryff, 2013).

A preliminary survey on the psychological well-being among adolescents with single parents at a Junior High School has been conducted. The survey results showed 58.3% of 72 respondents thought they did not have something special. Around half of the respondents did not feel proud of themselves, sad, embarrassed, powerless, did not receive what they wanted, lost their spirits, and anxious. These preliminary data indicate low well-being aspects, including negative affection, self-confidence, future orientation, and negative emotional management. A previous study found adolescents' psychological well-being could be decreased due to the absence of parents (Alfinuha et al., 2019). Therefore, adolescents with single parents' psychological well-being needs to be maintained.

A previous study found a positive correlation between gratitude and psychological well-being (Aisyah & Chisol, 2018). Gratitude is one of the factors in realizing a joyful and excellent situation (Lestari, 2021). Gratitude improves the positive perception of life events (Anjani et al., 2020) and decreases adolescent depression (Miller et al., 2014). Gratitude significantly and positively correlates to personal development, self-acceptance, positive correlation, and life objective achievement (Fauziah & Chusairi, 2022). Gratitude and self-compassion could significantly predict psychological well-being (Sari et al., 2020). A previous study among university students found that all dimensions of gratitude positively correlate to psychological well-being (Măirean et al., 2019). Moreover, the gratitude intervention relieves psychological symptoms and improves physical and mental well-being (Jans-beken et al., 2020).

The result from a meta-analysis shows gratitude training effectively influences the well-being of individuals (Wicaksono, 2021). A previous study found that the psychological well-being of mothers of children with specific necessities increased after being given gratitude training (Nduru, 2020). At the same time, another study found a significant well-being difference among physically disabled children after gratitude training (Dewanto & Retnowati, 2015). The two weeks of gratitude and kindness intervention develop relationships, improve daily life satisfaction and optimism, and decrease anxiety (Kerr et al., 2015). The psychological dynamics of gratitude training would provide reasoning changes while encountering life events and help the individuals with self-acceptance (Rahman & Nashori, 2022). The implementation of gratitude training could direct individuals to be grateful and see the positive side of every situation. Even if the individual suffers many losses, these individual keeps creating positive feelings about life optimism, productiveness, and life sufficiency (Froh et al., 2008).

Although many studies found a positive impact of gratitude training on psychological well-being, a correlational study found no significant correlation between gratitude and the psychological well-being of adolescents (Prabowo, 2017). Therefore, previous studies' results indicated inconsistencies in the role of gratitude training in dealing with the psychological well-being of the research subjects. This research examines the influence of gratitude training on psychological well-being, especially among adolescents with single parents as the research participants. The hypothesis is that gratitude training enhances the psychological well-being of adolescents with single parents.

Method

Research Design

This research has been approved by the Ethical Commission of Health Research, KEPK, Faculty of Medicine, with approval number: 4704/B.1/KEP.K-FKUMS/I/2013. The true experimental method with the pretest-posttest control group design was applied in this research. First, the psychological well-being scale was administered to adolescents in the experiment and control groups as the pretest. Then the gratitude training was delivered to the experimental group by an experienced trainer. During the intervention, two observers were involved. After the training, a session was conducted to reflect on the activities and the subjects' feelings. Lastly, as the posttest, the psychological well-being scale was readministered to adolescents in both groups.

Participants

Participants were students in a Junior High School between 12 and 15 years old with single parents who lived with one parent as the parents divorced or had passed away. Sixty-seven students met the criteria; after being randomly selected, 24 were grouped into experiment and control groups, each consisting of 12 students. The students and the parents willingly joined the research procedure as stated in the informed consent. [Table 1](#) shows the participants' distribution.

Table 1

The Research Subject Distribution

Groups	Gender		Classes			Parental Status	
	Male	Female	VII	VIII	IX	Single Father	Single Mother
Experiment	6	6	6	3	3	4	8
Control	6	6	2	7	3	4	8

Instruments

The data collection in the pretest and posttest stages was conducted with a psychological well-being scale developed for adolescents aged 12 to 15 ([Abidin et al., 2020](#)). The psychological well-being scale consisted of 38 items that measure ten dimensions of psychological well-being: (1) positive affection, (2) negative affection, (3) self-confidence, (4) positive relationship, (5) future orientation, (6) self-development, (7) negative emotional management, (8) responsibility, (9) problem-solving skill, and (10) harmony ([Ryff, 1989](#); [Diener, 2000](#)). The psychological well-being scale had a reliability score of $\alpha = .873$ and a good construct validity (RMSEA = .075; GFI = .91; CFI = .93; NNFI = .91; IFI = .93) ([Abidin et al., 2020](#)).

The gratitude training module

A gratitude training module consisting of five sessions was developed in the previous study among adolescents living in orphanages ([Megawati et al., 2019](#)). The module was modified before being applied in this research because of the different characteristics of research participants and different training delivery methods. In this research, the gratitude training is delivered offline with face-to-face meetings among adolescents with single parents aged 12 to 15. Moreover, an activity that is writing the feelings in a gratitude journal every day for a week is also added for this research. The description of each session of the gratitude training is as follows:

- 1) Opening
This stage lasted 40 minutes to manage the training participants and establish excellent rapport between the trainers and the trainee. The trainers explained shared arguments and promoted mini-games.
- 2) Introduction for supporting thoughts of gratitude for blessings
The introduction aims to support the notion of feeling grateful for His blessing and recognizing the sense of gratitude. This session lasted for 2x40 minutes to train the subjects to think positively about their lives and to be grateful for the received blessings.
- 3) Learning to write the feelings in a gratitude journal
This session lasted 40 minutes to direct the subjects to behave positively by describing goodness, joyful events, acknowledgment, and joy.
- 4) Identifying the source of the joy
This session lasted 40 minutes to determine the source of goodness.
- 5) Expressing the grateful feeling to God the Almighty
This session lasted 50 minutes to express the gratitude of the participants.
- 6) Writing the feeling in a gratitude journal for a week
In this session, the subjects wrote their feelings in the gratitude journal for a week to apply the training results.

Five experts consisting of psychologists, trainers of the psychological field, and psychology lecturers were involved in validating the gratitude training module. The experts judge the module quantitatively and qualitatively. Based on the quantitative judgment, the Aiken V of the gratitude training module was .82, slightly higher than the standard of Aiken V = .80. This result indicates that the gratitude training module is valid.

On the qualitative judgment, the experts provided some feedback for further module improvement, such as (1) explaining the procedure of practicing gratitude, (2) adding an explanation about the materials on every session, (3) replacing the dictions with more understandable dictions, and (4) providing attachment of gratitude journal.

After revising the module based on expert feedback, the gratitude training module was piloted among ten students of VIII A class in a Junior High School to evaluate the estimated time, the applied media, the material accuracy, the worksheet, and the implementation on every session. Every student receives the worksheet, and then the facilitator shares the instructions for the training session based on the training module. The materials, time duration, and media were evaluated by scoring 1 to 4 for each item, resulting in a mean of 35.25 in the relevance category. The implementation of Google Forms to facilitate the recapitulation process was also evaluated.

Data analysis

Before testing the hypothesis, normality, and homogeneity tests were conducted. Based on the Shapiro-Wilk test, the data from the pretest and posttest are normally distributed. Based on the Levene test, the data distribution from the experiment and control groups are homogenous. Therefore, quantitative data analysis with mixed ANOVA was conducted with SPSS version 23 for Windows.

Results

The mean psychological well-being scores in the pretest and posttest from the experiment and control groups are shown in [Table 2](#). The mean psychological well-being score in the experiment group increased by 23.16, as the pretest score was lower than the posttest score,

138.92 and 162.08, respectively. On the contrary, the mean of psychological well-being in the control group remains the same, with 155.92 in the pretest and 155.00 in the posttest.

Table 2
The Mean of Psychological Well-being Score

Group	Mean		Difference
	Pretest	Posttest	
Experiment	138.92	162.08	23.16
Control	155.92	155.00	-.92

Table 3 shows the ANOVA mixed analysis results. The interaction between the group (experiment-control) and test (pretest-posttest) is significant ($F = 4.327$; $p = .043$). The results indicate that the changes between the experiment and control groups significantly differ from pretest to posttest.

Table 3
The Hypothesis Statistic Test with ANOVA Mixed

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	3520.229 ^a	3	1173.410	2.918	.045*
Intercept	1123326.021	1	1123326.021	2793.593	<.001***
Groups	295.021	1	295.021	.734	.396
Test	1485.188	1	1485.188	3.694	.061
Group*Test	1740.021	1	1740.021	4.327	.043*
Error	17692.750	44	402.108		
Total	1144539.000	48			
Corrected Total	21212.979	47			

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

A post hoc test was conducted as there was a significant interaction between the group and the test. From the post hoc test, the mean difference of the experiment group is significant ($p = .034$; $p < .05$). Therefore, gratitude training enhances the psychological well-being of adolescents with single parents. On the contrary, the result from the post hoc test shows the mean difference in the control group is not significant ($p > .05$). This result indicates no significant changes from the pretest to the posttest among the control group.

Figure 1
Profile Plot

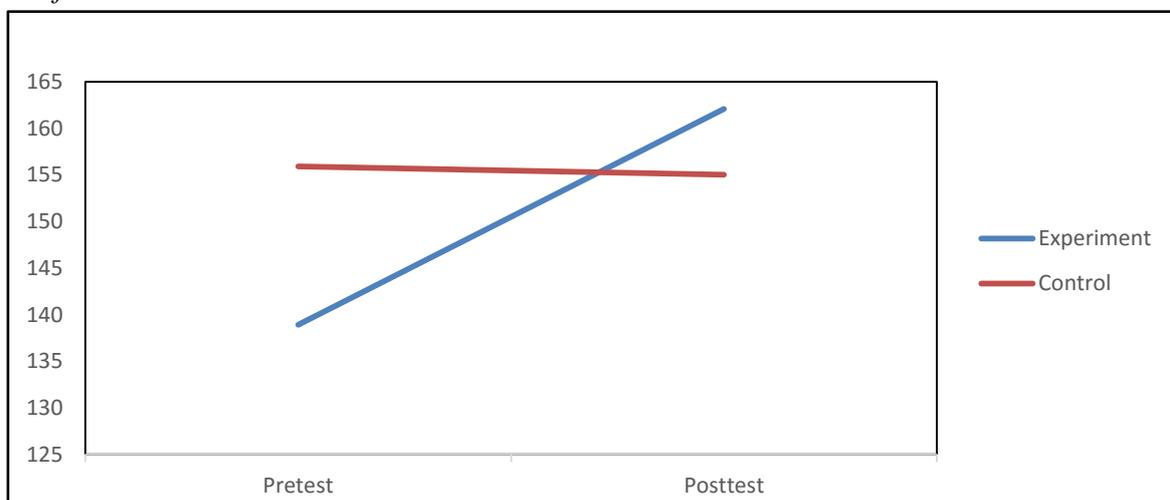


Figure 1 shows the analysis with a profile plot. The profile plot reflects increasing psychological well-being scores before and after the gratitude training in the experimental group, as shown in the blue line. On the other hand, the psychological well-being score among the control group decreased from the pretest to the posttest, with a mean difference of $-.92$, as shown in the red line.

Discussion

This research shows gratitude training enhances the psychological well-being of adolescents with single parents. Adolescents with single parents are different from those with complete parents. Teenagers from broken home families might feel inferior (Ramadhani et al., 2016). They received pressures from the environment, as observable in adolescents with single parents, which made them feel different from other people. Thus, they found themselves discriminated from the social environment. This situation decreased their psychological well-being (Ifdil et al., 2020).

This gratitude training encouraged the adolescents to tell their life stories. If they had adverse life experiences, they had been encouraged to think positively and find the positive sides. They were also encouraged to acknowledge that they received positive matters; therefore, they need to be grateful (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Grateful for the positive matters is a broader life orientation (Jans-beken et al., 2020).

The findings align with a meta-analysis that gratitude training effectively improves individual well-being (Wicaksono, 2021). Gratitude training effectively improves psychological well-being and subjective well-being among hospital staff (Sadeghi & Pour, 2015). A study among adolescents with divorced parents also found that gratitude encourages individuals to perceive themselves positively, increasing subjective well-being (Rahman & Nashori, 2022). Moreover, among clinical samples, the gratitude intervention constructed the relationship, enhancing satisfaction in daily life and optimism and lowering anxiety, increasing well-being (Kerr et al., 2015).

In one of the gratitude training sessions, participants were provided information about the sources of joy. In this research, the sources of joy are focused on joy from Allah the Almighty, parents, friends, and people's surroundings. The participants were asked to mention what joy they received. Therefore, participants experienced cognitive processes that might include acknowledging external sources while sharing positive matters (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). This activity is in line with the Qur'an that suggests people be grateful by remembering the gifted joy and blessing of Allah the Almighty (Karimulloh et al., 2021).

In the other session, participants were asked to write a gratitude expression and share it with the persons that made them feel happy. Most participants expressed thanking their parents and grandparents for taking care of them. Writing gratitude impacts better joy and happiness up to a month after the intervention (Seligman et al., 2005). Feeling grateful directs the psychological function to the more significant things, empowering the greater adaptive coping strategy (Sztachañska et al., 2019). Simple training in gratitude strengthened individuals to understand well-being and the potential of well-being; thus, they could improve their well-being (Deichert et al., 2021). Individuals with knowledge, experience, and gratitude will achieve well-being (Yoshimura & Berzins, 2017).

Writing a gratitude journal is the most excellent applied intervention to enhance gratitude (Caragol et al., 2022). The gratitude journal allowed the participants to write thanking expressions and to practice three good things to do. Writing in a gratitude book helped establish a social source and a new relationship between gratitude feeling and a feeling of belonging (Diebel et al., 2016). Some previous studies found that after writing gratitude journals, the participants had joyful increments and low depression symptoms until six months later (Caragol et al., 2022). The repetition and training under the theory of

behaviorism are applicable to reach the targeted behaviors as the most expected result. The demanded behaviors could positively empower, while the inappropriate behavior would lead to negative acknowledgment (Shahbana et al., 2020).

In this research, every session in the gratitude training led the subjects to enhance their gratitude. Gratitude may support individuals to reach personal well-being and health (Elosúa, 2015). Feeling grateful positively and significantly influences adolescents' psychological well-being (Rahayu et al., 2019). All dimensions of gratitude were correlated to the psychological well-being dimension (Măirean et al., 2019).

However, there are limitations in this research. First, the limitation dealt with no manipulation check as the evidence of the participant's attention, the intervention's effectiveness, and the mediating process. Second, there is no follow-up measurement to know the long-term effect of gratitude training on the psychological well-being of adolescents with single parents. Further research is expected to conduct manipulation checks and promote follow-up measurement for 1-2 weeks after the intervention of gratitude training. Future researchers may deliver gratitude training for adolescents with vulnerable conditions having low psychological well-being, such as bullied victims, adolescents with specific necessities, and adolescents from low-income family backgrounds.

Conclusion

Gratitude training enhances the psychological well-being of adolescents with single parents. The results imply that adolescents with single parents need to practice gratitude training for better psychological well-being. Adolescents may be grateful even with the slightest joy, as it will influence individuals' psychological well-being. Gratitude training may be applied in schools to enhance the psychological well-being of adolescents.

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Declarations

Author contribution. NH established the research topic, collected and analyzed the data, and wrote the report. MJ developed research ideas and proofread and corrected the final manuscript.

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